



July 16, 2026

Dear Representative,

On behalf of the members and supporters of the American Association of University Women (AAUW), **we urge you to oppose the Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies (Labor-HHS) appropriations bill (H.R. 9260).** This bill would increase barriers to access quality higher education, comprehensive reproductive healthcare, and economic opportunity.

AAUW's mission to advance equity for women and girls is intrinsically tied to the fight to reduce barriers to higher education, workplace participation, and economic security. The current Labor-HHS bill undermines all three.

The bill undermines access to higher education. Higher education remains one of the most powerful drivers of women's economic mobility. Yet this bill makes college more expensive for students who can least afford it. It significantly cuts Federal Work-Study and the Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grants, increasing the cost of attendance for low- and moderate-income households and forcing millions of students to take on more debt to earn a degree.

While it addresses the funding shortfall for Pell Grants and increases the maximum award, it does so by eliminating subsidized Direct Loans. Eliminating these loans would result in the accumulation of interest charges before students have graduated, pushing more than 4 million students into deeper debt. Moreover, cutting subsidized loans to offset Pell Grant costs establishes a troubling precedent of shifting resources from one form of student aid to another rather than increasing investment in higher education.

The bill undermines reproductive freedom and women's economic security. When women cannot access reproductive healthcare, their ability to pursue higher education, build careers, and achieve financial stability is directly and deeply affected. Yet this bill pushes affordable reproductive healthcare further out of reach for millions of people by maintaining the Hyde Amendment and cutting funding for the Title X Family Planning Program and the Teen Pregnancy Prevention program. These provisions negatively impact women's autonomy by limiting their care choices, especially for women with low incomes, women of color, young people, and rural communities.

The bill undermines equal opportunity and workplace protections. The bill prohibits funding for diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives that promote fair educational and economic opportunity. These programs are intended to address systemic barriers that have historically excluded marginalized communities, enabling them to participate in their workplaces, learning environments, and other institutions without fear of discrimination or bias. Cutting funding for such programs disproportionately harms women, people of color and other marginalized communities by limiting resources available to address systemic issues.



The bill also cuts billions from the Department of Labor, eliminating workforce development programs and weakening the agency responsible for enforcing workplace protections, combating discrimination, and advancing pay equity. These cuts make it harder for workers to access good jobs, develop new skills, and hold employers accountable for fair and equitable workplaces.

AAUW believes that every person deserves the opportunity to pursue higher education, participate fully in the workforce, and live free from discrimination. At a time when students, workers, and families face rising economic challenges, Congress should strengthen, not dismantle, the investments and protections that expand opportunity.

For these reasons, we urge you to **vote against the FY27 Labor-HHS appropriations bill (H.R. 9260)** and support legislation that invests in affordable higher education, protects reproductive freedom, safeguards workplace rights, and advances equal opportunity for all. Cosponsorship and votes associated with this legislation may be scored in the AAUW Action Fund *Congressional Voting Record* for the 119th Congress. Please do not hesitate to contact me at 202-728-3300 or kissellm@aauw.org if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in purple ink that reads "Meghan Kissell". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Meghan Kissell
Senior Director, Policy & Member Advocacy